

Message Text

SECRET

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73-60

ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4580

INFO AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

S E C R E T MOSCOW 15512

LIMDIS

LONDON PLEASE PASS STOESSEL AND DUBS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, PE, US, CI, UR

SUBJ: PERUVIAN PURCHASE OF SOVIET ARMS

REF: LIMA 8893

1. SUMMARY. EMBASSY WOULD LIKE TO OFFER SOME THOUGHTS ON LIMA'S REFTEL. WE BELIEVE THAT THE USG SHOULD NOT OVERREACT TO PURCHASE OF SOVIET TANKS BY PERU. INDEED, U.S. OVER-REACTION MAY WELL BE ONE OF RESULTS HOPED FOR BY MOSCOW. WE WOULD FAVOR A BILATERAL DEMARCHE TO THE SOVIETS, PERHAPS IN THE CONTEXT OF AMBASSADOR STOESSEL'S CALLS EARLY AFTER HIS ARRIVAL. END SUMMARY.

2. AMONG SOVIET MOTIVES IN MAKING THE SALE, WE WOULD GUESS THE FOLLOWING ARE PROMINENT:

A. FIRST, TO MAKE THE FIRST REAL SOVIET INROADS INTO THE CONTINENTAL LATIN AMERICAN ARMS MARKET, FOR THE GENERAL OBJECTIVE OF ENLARGING POLITICAL INFLUENCE IN THE AREA (AS WELL AS GENERATING HARD CURRENCY). SIMILAR SOVIET EFFORTS IN CHILE

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BEFORE ALLENDE'S FALL APPARENTLY FOUNDERED ON THE OPPOSITION OF

THE CHILEAN MILITARY.

B. SECOND, TO BOLSTER LATIN AMERICAN REGIMES INCLINED TO TAKE AN EXTREME NATIONALIST POSITION. IT WOULD BE ALL THE BETTER, FROM THE SOVIET POINT OF VIEW, IF RESULTING TENSIONS FRACTURED THE CONTINENT ALONG IDEOLOGICAL LINES, THUS INCREASING PROBLEMS FOR THE UNITED STATES AND GIVING MOSCOW NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISCREET MEDDLING. IN THIS REGARD, MOSCOW WOULD PROBABLY WELCOME A U.S. MOVE TO INCREASE ARMS DELIVERIES TO CHILE IN RESPONSE TO THE SOVIET SALE TO PERU, SINCE THIS WOULD ALLOW IT TO EXPLOIT BOTH NATIONALISM AND IDEOLOGY IN PLAYING ON PERUVIAN CONCERNS.

C. THIRD, TO STRENGTHEN SOVIET PROGRESSIVE CREDENTIALS IN THIRD WORLD. WHEN SALE BECOMES PUBLIC, SOVIETS WOULD PROBABLY SEEK TO PRESENT IT IN THIRD WORLD ARENA AS PRACTICAL STEP ON BEHALF OF PROGRESSIVE REGIME FACED WITH SECURITY THREAT FROM FASCIST NEIGHBOR.

3. WE BELIEVE IT IS PREMATURE TO CONCLUDE THAT TANK SALE REPRESENTS MAJOR SOVIET BID FOR INFLUENCE IN LATIN AMERICA OR EVEN IN PERU. WE WOULD EXPECT SOVIETS TO EXERCISE FAR MORE CAUTION IN THEIR ARMS POLICY IN LATIN AMERICA THAN THEY WOULD IN OTHER PARTS OF THE THIRD WORLD. IN THE FIRST PLACE, THEY HAVE A LOW OPINION OF STABILITY OF ANY PARTICULAR LATIN AMERICAN GOVERNMENT, AND ALLENDE'S FALL CAN ONLY HAVE REINFORCED THAT. IN THE SECOND PLACE, THEY CONTINUE TO HAVE A HEALTHY RESPECT FOR U.S. POLITICAL INFLUENCE IN THE AREA. AND IN THE THIRD PLACE, THEY ARE PARTICULARLY CONSCIOUS OF THE NEGATIVE EFFECT A LARGE-SCALE SOVIET ARMS SUPPLY POLICY COULD HAVE ON THE U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP, WHICH IS FAR MORE IMPORTANT TO THEM THAN ANY PUTATIVE BENEFITS DERIVED FROM THE LATIN AMERICA.

4. TO US AND OTHERS, SOVIETS MAY TRY TO REPRESENT THEIR ARMS SALE TO PERU AS CONSISTENT WITH THEIR ROLE AS A GLOBAL POWER AND WITH THE INCREASE IN THEIR DIPLOMATIC AND MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE HEMISPHERE WHICH HAS BEEN EVIDENT IN RECENT YEARS. THEY MAY ALSO ARGUE THAT IT IS CONSISTENT WITH THE TREND IN U.S. POLICY AWAY FROM PATERNALISM AND TOWARD THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF GREATER LATIN AMERICAN ENGAGEMENT IN THE WORLD AT LARGE. NEVERTHELESS, FROM THE U.S. POINT OF VIEW IT IS A STEP INCONSISTENT WITH ARMS RESTRAINT,

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A POTENTIALLY DESTABILIZING INITIATIVE BY THE SOVIET UNION IN AN AREA CENTRAL TO U.S. INTERESTS, AND AN EFFORT (THOUGH ON A MINOR SCALE) TO EXPLOIT THE U.S.-SOVIET DETENTE TO SOVIET NATIONAL ADVANTAGE.

5. IF THE FOREGOING ANALYSIS IS CORRECT, IT SUGGESTS THE CONCLUSION THAT A U.S. RESPONSE IS INDEED CALLED FOR. AS WE SEE IT, HOWEVER, A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN U.S. ARMS DELIVERIES TO LATIN

AMERICA (AS ALL THREE OF EMBASSY LIMA'S OPTIONS WOULD APPEAR TO CONTEMPLATE) MAY BE A U.S. RESPONSE WHICH WOULD PLEASE THE SOVIETS, BECAUSE OF ITS POTENTIAL FOR POLARIZING STATES AND ADDING TO TENSIONS IN THE HEMISPHERE.WE HOPE THERE WOULD BE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION OF OTHER ALTERNATIVES BEFORE SUCH A RESPONSE WERE MADE. WE DO BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT A BILATERAL DEMARCHE TO THE SOVIETS -- MAKING THE POINTS NOTED IN THE LAST SENTENCE OF THE PREVIOUS PARAGRAPH -- COULD HELP KEEP SOVIET ARMS POLICY IN LATIN AMERICA WITHIN REASONABLE LIMITS. SUCH A DEMARCHE, PERHAPS AS PART OF A GENERAL STATEMENT ON ARMS RESTRAINT (WHICH COULD INCLUDE SUCH OTHER AREAS AS AFGHANISTAN) MAY BE AN APPROPRIATE SUBJECT FOR AMBASSADOR STOESSEL TO TAKE UP SOON AFTER HE ARRIVES.
MELENCAMP

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